

POLICIES

May seeks to shift focus from Brexit and leadership to policies

By Pascale Hughes and Nigel Morris

Theresa May and her ministers are to attempt to shift the political focus away from Brexit and her leadership problems to domestic issues such as housing.

She is keen to use the Manchester conference to reinvigorate her commitment to tackling inequality and injustice, and to reach out to voters who turned their backs on the party at the election.

The Prime Minister announced plans to freeze tuition fees and to pump another £10bn into the Help to Buy scheme aimed at getting more people on to the housing ladder.

Party sources said tackling the housing crisis would be a key

conference theme. The Conservatives' "failure on housing" has turned Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn into a credible prospect for Prime Minister, Communities Secretary Sajid Javid warned yesterday.

Mr Javid attacked his party's record on housing as a "national outrage".

"For too many growing up today, things are very different," he said. "For them, increasingly, a house seems like something that you have to inherit."

"The opportunity my generation took for granted now seems lost to many. This is a national outrage."

The expansion of the Help to Buy equity loan scheme would help

135,000 new purchasers, Mrs May said. She admitted that the domestic policy announcements marked a change in her party's approach on tuition fees in England, saying she had listened to voters.

Mrs May told BBC1's *Andrew Marr Show* that the whole student finance system would be reviewed, and did not rule out a move to a graduate tax.

Fee repayment thresholds will also rise, so that graduates will start paying back loans once they earn £25,000, rather than £21,000, she added.

Mrs May confirmed that the roll-out of universal credit to replace a number of other benefits would continue as planned, amid complaints that claimants are being left without money for weeks while their applications are processed.

Several Conservative MPs wrote to Work and Pensions Secretary David Gauke last week urging him to pause the roll-out.

"Most people agree that universal credit is a good system because it is a system that ensures that work always pays," Mrs May said.

Asked whether her decision to call a general election three years early was a "mistake", she replied: "No. Is it ever a mistake to give people the opportunity to vote? I don't think so."

i Theresa May will say sorry to activists for the Conservative Party's performance in the snap general election she called earlier this year, she said yesterday.

Sir Peter Lampl, chairman of the Sutton Trust think-tank, warned: "The Government must go much further to make fees fairer and it is right to set up a review. It's a scandal that the poorest students graduate with the highest debt."

Universities UK echoed his comments, with chief executive Alistair Jarvis saying the fees system had enabled the sector to offer a "world-class education", but that it would become more affordable by reintroducing maintenance grants and reducing rates for low and medium earners.



Theresa May and her husband, Philip, listen to speeches on the first day of the Conservative conference. AFP/GETTY

EDUCATION

Student loan repayments to tackle shortage of teachers

By Richard Vaughan

Foreign language and science teachers will be reimbursed parts of their student loans under government plans to address the growing shortages of teachers in the subjects.

Education Secretary Justine Greening announced the plans, which will save graduates who enter

into teaching £540 a year from their loan repayments.

The proposals will be introduced as a pilot at first that will target around 800 modern foreign language teachers and 1,700 science teachers.

According to the Department for Education, a typical teacher in their fifth year would be reimbursed around £540. This would be on top of

the £360 graduates would save from the loan repayment threshold rising from £21,000 to £25,000.

Speaking at the Conservative Party Conference in Manchester, Ms Greening (*inset*) said: "We have to take the priorities of a new generation of voters, and make them our own. And that means we've got to be positive, constructive, and optimistic."

"We'll win the battle of ideas by showing how our politics delivers for them in practice, how it makes a difference in their lives."

She added that 1.8 million more children go to good or outstanding schools than in 2010, while those from disadvantaged backgrounds were more likely to go to university.

"There's a whole lot more that we can and we must do to help make sure this really is a country that works for everyone, and that the benefit of our education reform is spread to all areas so that how far someone can go in life isn't determined by their family, or indeed the country they're born in," she said.



TRANSPORT

£400m rail and road funding boost promised to the North

By Richard Vaughan

Rail and road infrastructure projects in the North will receive a £400m boost under plans to be announced by the Chancellor today.

Philip Hammond (*inset*) will confirm proposals to provide £300m to improve connections between the HS2 rail route and cities that are not on the high speed rail link.

The Treasury hopes the scheme will speed journey times between cities such as Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds and York. It comes after the Government was heavily criticised for abandoning plans to electrify the railways across

the North, despite pressing on with the second phase of Crossrail in London.

Chris Grayling, the Transport Secretary, was accused of "years of broken promises" for scrapping plans to electrify rail routes such as Liverpool to Manchester and London to Swansea.

Mr Hammond will also confirm a £100m funding package for 33 new road schemes – 10 in the North East, 13 in the North West and 10 in Yorkshire and the Humber. Ministers claim that it will bring the total investment in transport in the North to a record £13bn by 2020.



COVER STORY

Critics call for Johnson to be sacked over disloyalty

By Nigel Morris

POLITICAL EDITOR

Senior Conservatives rounded on Boris Johnson as Theresa May struggled to assert her authority at the start of her demoralised party's annual conference.

Preparations for the event were derailed by the Foreign Secretary's demands for her to toughen her line on Brexit and reports that he believed she would be driven from office within a year.

His intervention prompted calls for her to sack him for disloyalty but Downing Street sources insisted they did not expect him to be fired – or walk out of the Cabinet.

The mood swung against Mr Johnson, with prominent party figures taking swipes at his leadership ambitions and accusing him of destabilising the party when it remained vulnerable after its election disappointment.

Ruth Davidson, the party's Scottish chief who has been touted as a possible future leader, urged the party to abandon the "Tory psychodrama" over Mrs May's leadership and insisted she was "not standing" for the role. In her speech, Ms Davidson also called on the party to unite behind the Prime Minister.

The Scottish Secretary, David Mundell, mocked his cabinet colleague's electoral appeal north of the border, recalling Mr Johnson came third in an election to become Edinburgh University's rector.

In a rebuke to suggestions that Mr Johnson was planning a leadership challenge, other ministers endorsed Mrs May's insistence she would lead the party into the 2022 election.



Boris Johnson yesterday; he was accused by one minister of breaking an unspoken code of loyalty to the party leader. REUTERS

The First Secretary of State, Damian Green, reproached Mr Johnson for his outspokenness on Brexit. He said it was understandable for ministers to have personal views on policy, but added: "It is extremely sensible when you are in

i Mrs May insisted yesterday her Cabinet was "united" behind her leadership but dodged questions on the BBC's *Andrew Marr Show* about whether the Foreign Secretary was "unsackable".

government to express those views in private rather than public."

A former cabinet minister said: "The membership sets great store by a code of loyalty to the leader. Boris has broken that code not once but twice in recent weeks."

A senior MP said: "The feedback we're getting is members want the party to get on with the job and not be distracted by noises off."

She told BBC1's *Andrew Marr Show*: "Boris is absolutely behind the Florence speech and the line we have taken. What Boris is saying is the importance of the approach we have taken in the Florence speech."

LEADERSHIP

Johnson thinks May's time is up

By Will Worley

Pressure continued to mount on Theresa May yesterday, as it was revealed Boris Johnson believes her time in as Prime Minister is limited.

The Foreign Secretary has told friends she only as "a year at most" in power, according to Channel 4 journalist Gary Gibbon, who has spent months tracking Mr Johnson.

Newspaper articles outlining his vision for Brexit was seen as a direct challenge to the Prime Minister, now believed by some to be too weak to sack Mr Johnson, and fearful of the possibility of triggering a leadership challenge.

Fellow ministers have urged her to assert her authority or face the consequences.

"Either she sacks Boris or she goes," one told *The Sunday Times*. "It's that simple".

Brexit were "quite unacceptable".

He said Mr Johnson was appealing to "elderly" voters and "those elements of their personal conviction that he thinks are most likely to trigger support for him".

"I understand those arguments but they are phoney, they are duplicitous," he said.

Lord Heseltine, whose own manoeuvring destabilised Margaret Thatcher's government, pointed out that he resigned from her administration. "I resigned. I think it's

very difficult for Boris to go on making the sort of interventions he is and remain in the Government," the peer said.

But with her fragile grip on Parliament, sacking Mr Johnson would be a risk for Theresa May, he suggested. "Leaving him there until

he completely oversteps the mark is a wise thing to do," he said.

"The whole thing is unsustainable – you cannot have a government in which members of the Cabinet are voicing opinions which are not consistent."



BREXIT

Heseltine labels Foreign Secretary 'phoney and duplicitous'

By David Hughes

Boris Johnson peddles "phoney" and "duplicitous" arguments about Brexit and it is difficult to see how he can remain in Government, Lord Heseltine (*inset*) has said.

In a strong attack on the Foreign Secretary, the former deputy prime minister said Mr Johnson's position was "unsustainable" after two interventions to set out his personal approach to the Brexit talks.

Speaking on *Sunday with Niall Paterson* on Sky News, Lord Heseltine said "we all know what he's up to" and added that his views on

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